

STATINTL

LETTERS

U-2 Pilot Award

I think it is time for someone to step out and say what many Americans are thinking yet few take the trouble to set forth in concrete terms.

First, however, allow me to clear the air. I am not now, nor have I ever been, employed by the aircraft industry. I have never been attached to any of the flying services during my military service. I do admit to being interested in aviation and very thankful to be an American.

I believe it is time for the American people to take a little democratic action and show Mr. Khrushchev and the world what Americans really think of men like Francis G. Powers.

Because of diplomacy, world politics and other devices of tact, our government has not been able to take a truly strong stand for Francis Powers during his trial. That does not mean that our people cannot show their gratitude for the men flying the dangerous but necessary reconnaissance missions in this age of survival.

With this idea in mind I suggest that a Francis G. Powers Award be given each year to an individual, flight group, research group or aircraft company that made a significant contribution in the field of aerial reconnaissance. A perpetual trophy and suitable plaques would be adequate.

Reasons for the institution of such an award are manifold. First and foremost, in my mind at least, is let us not forget that Francis Powers is imprisoned in Soviet Russia and will be for a long, long time.

Secondly, let the Russians and the world know there are Americans who believe in standing firm for the rights and privileges

of free men. Let it also be known that we are willing to take the chances and shoulder the responsibility for action necessary to preserve this freedom. When we, as free individuals, begin to show our indignation and begin taking strong individual and group stands in matters of international affairs, you may rest assured that the Kremlin will re-evaluate our national psychology. Their attitude will change from one of "let's keep pushing" to one of "do we dare push further?"

The Francis G. Powers Award made on an annual basis and publicized through our news media will show that we Americans do respect individual efforts, that we do stand behind the dangerous but necessary action required to preserve ourselves and the world from catastrophic surprise attack and that we shall not forget Francis Powers.

I have merely presented an idea. Perhaps some of the readers of AVIATION WEEK who are in a position to organize and act will pick up the ball and carry the idea to fruition.

Some cynics will say that Francis Powers and other U-2 pilots were paid extremely well, and that in itself is sufficient reward. To them I say this: Gentlemen, if you were paid twice the salary would you fly over Russia?

I owe a great deal to men like Francis Powers and his fellow pilots in RB-47Es, RB-57Ds and U-2 aircraft. All of us do. I humbly thank them.

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